

[Congressional Memories: Lawmakers Recall Their Standout Gifts](#) (Roll Call – November 29, 2011)

By Kate Tummarello

QUOTE: “My parents gave my sister and I a bicycle built for two,” Sen. [Claire McCaskill](#) said of the bicycle her parents “really couldn’t afford.” The Missouri Democrat is one of several Members who treasured a set of wheels. “My sister and I went everywhere together on it,” she said, adding that they would often ride to the library in their “little bitty town” and fill the bicycle’s basket with books before riding home. “I think I was pretty excited about my first bicycle,” Rep.

[Mel Watt](#)

□

(D-N.C.) said. “I rode it all over the place until we had to start taking the parts off it to fix my brother’s bike.” Rep.

[Betty McCollum](#)

(D-Minn.) received her first bicycle at 5 years old, but she couldn’t take it for a ride outside. “My father was stationed at an [Air Force base] in Ohio, and there was a lot of snow,” she said. “My parents had to clean everything out down in the basement and pop the training wheels on so I could ride it around down in the basement.” Rep. [Jason Chaffetz](#) (R-Utah) wouldn’t mind finding his favorite gift under the Christmas tree again. “It’s pretty tough to top the Big Wheel,” he said of the iconic children’s tricycle he got when he was 6 years old. “They don’t make enough Big Wheels these days. If they had a man size, I’d buy one. It’s still on my list. If I could ride one around the Capitol, I would.” He insists the Big Wheel didn’t come from his parents. “Santa gave it to me — what are you talking about?” he asked. A red Radio Flyer wagon stands out for Rep.

[Emanuel Cleaver](#)

(D-Mo.), but he didn’t find it under a tree on Christmas morning. “My three sisters went to sleep like they were supposed to do as Santa is coming, but I couldn’t,” he said. “So my father hid it under the house.” The next day, his father scolded him for staying awake, saying, “It’s really tragic that you caused Santa all of this trouble.”

Guns A-Blazin'

Guns also ranked high among lawmakers’ favorite gifts. “I remember my Daisy BB gun,” Rep.

[Steve King](#)

(R-Iowa) said. “That was a fantastic Christmas present when I was a kid. I wore it out.” King

said he received the BB gun from his parents when he was about 9 years old, and he used it to shoot at backyard wildlife. “I shot a lot of sparrows, a few pigeons,” he said. “I like to hunt, so getting a shotgun was a huge thing,” Sen.

[John Hoeven](#)

(R-N.D.) said. He called the gift “special” because he and his father used to hunt together. “I was about 12 years old. That was certainly a big one.” “I got all of the typical presents,” said Sen.

[Roger Wicker](#)

(R-Miss.), but one Dec. 25 almost seemed like a scene from “A Christmas Story.” “When I was a small boy, I got a popgun,” he said, “and I broke it the first day. I broke it on Christmas Day.”

Christmas Keepsakes

“I would borrow my parents’ camera to take pictures from the time I was about 4 years old,” Sen. [Patrick Leahy](#) (D-Vt.) said. “They gave me my first camera, and it was a Hopalong Cassidy box

camera.” The photography enthusiast still has the simple camera decorated with the cowboy character. “I’ve kept every camera I’ve ever had. ... I remember that one very well.” Sen. [Mary Landrieu](#)

(D-La.) loved horseback riding as a child, so a pair of white leather riding boots was a special gift from her parents when she was 12. “I rode — well, I tried to ride — growing up,” she said. “I volunteered to work at any stable that would take me.” “The one that I remember, that I didn’t think I was going to get, was a Bonnie Braids doll,” said Sen. [Kay Bailey Hutchison](#) (R-Texas), referring to a toy based on a character in the Dick Tracy comic strip. Rep.

[Bill Pascrell](#)

(D-N.J.) remembers getting a recent gift from a friend in Congress. “I had a nice Christmas present from

[Steny Hoyer](#)

about seven or eight years ago,” he said. “It was a clock. ... It was not only timely, but it was beautiful. And it was a surprise.” Pascrell said he still keeps the clock in his house.